

AUTOMOTIVE SECTION

# GARAGE CHARGE SYSTEM BAD POLICY

AUTOMOTIVE SECTION

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## Find Charge System Proves to Be Unfair to Customers of Garages

By T. P. Bowman.  
(In "Motor Age.")

"How is business?" is the question often asked of the garage manager, owner or whoever happens to be responsible for business, and in nearly every instance the answer is "Fine" or "Very good, considering conditions," and in reality the man who says it makes the remark conscientiously. For eleven months of the year he rests easy with the business done and awaits the end of the last month, anxious to read the report of the year's profits.

Finally the year's business is placed before him in figures which are not an estimate but an actual statement of the profits of each department summed up to represent the profit of the total business, and what a surprise they sometimes are.

At a first glance Mr. Manager is up in the air and his first thought is to take a "For Sale" sign on the front door of the place which would hide the Rock of Gibraltar.

But before doing this he again seats himself in his chair and gives the report a little study. His first thought, perhaps, is to discover who is to blame for the existing condition and replace the guilty party or parties with efficient help. "Why," he remarks in the height of excitement, "we have done a larger business this last year than we have done in preceding years, and we have barely made expenses in comparison to the profits of former years."

Business Is Greener. He turns to the report of the repair department, which shows that its total business is 50 per cent more than the year before, and the profit is no greater. It is a peculiar and state of affairs, but after checking the report it is found to be correct, and further, it discloses the secret of no profits for the 50 per cent business increase.

First to catch the manager's eye, "Credit by adjustment, \$15." Prying into the day slips and memorandums for the day bearing the date of this particular transaction, he finds that about seven weeks before this credit was issued John Jones had had certain repairs made on his car which amounted to \$10.50. After trying to recall the particular transactions, he remembers the occurrence very clearly.

After having sent Mr. Jones several statements of his account without having received any reply, to say nothing of a remittance, he called on Mr. Jones, in person, and after listening to Mr. Jones' tale of woe the account was cut in two and a \$15 credit issued, which, with Mr. Jones' check for \$15.50, balanced the account and cleared it off the books.

No Longer a Customer. As the garage manager remembers it, Mr. Jones claimed that his car was in no better condition after he had it repaired than it was before, and that it was necessary for him to take it to another garage where he could use it with any satisfaction. The manager also remembers that Mr. Jones did not return to the garage with his car, nor had he returned to register any complaint, not even after several reminders of his unpaid account had been forwarded to him.

The affair did not have a good appearance, but, as the manager would say it, "anything to get it off the books," so the amount was split in favor of Mr. Jones and he hadn't seen the customer since. In fact, Mr. Jones was no longer a customer, just a remembrance of one and one of the many characters who helped to make up the reason for big business and profits.

Mr. Jones was not the only one; there were others. In fact, after the adjustments alone had been totaled they amounted to a sum which would have made a satisfactory profit for the repair department.

Why Poor Showing? Now, who was to blame for the poor showing of the repair department? Why, the party who made the adjustments, of course, and the party who made the adjustments happened to be the manager, and, passing the blame from one source to the other, it finally settled itself in the credit department, of which the manager was in charge. And there the blame rested. It could be traced no further. The poor showing of the accessory department, the tire sales and every other department found its seat of origin in the credit department.

The credit department was to blame for the poor showing of the entire business for the entire year, and the question arose as to the efficiency of that particular department. After a thorough investigation of credits it was found that each of the credit customers had the best of credit references as per the judgment of the retail dealers' credit association, which consisted of grocers, clothiers, etc., but which did not include the garage business.

It was found that car owners would pay their grocery bills, dry goods bill, and clothing bill promptly at the termination of their credit period, but they would pay no attention whatever to their garage bill.

Car owners would not dispute their

grocery bill because they knew they had received the goods and unless they paid for them promptly their credit would be questioned. However, it appeared that it made little difference with their garage credit. They would ignore the claims of one garage and go to another, and from all appearances made a practice of going the rounds, figuring that the garage was entitled to only what could be extracted from their purse by force.

It must be understood by the garage owner, manager and other executives that the popular prices for repairs warrant only a reasonable margin of profit and if that reasonable amount of profit is to be shaded off by adjustments and refunds it soon upsets the foundation for the basis of profit.

Only one of two things can be done to assure the garage of its proper profit: the cost of repairs must be increased to allow for a certain amount of loss by refunds and adjustments, or the cash must be obtained for the repairs or merchandise before the customer leaves the place.

Charge Injustice to Customers. To increase the cost to overcome the loss is an injustice to your customers who pay their bills promptly, because it means that the man who pays his account also pays the deadbeat's account. The customer will not be long in discovering this, and his first thought will be to find a garage where the costs of repairs are more reasonable.

Of course, in doing this he undoubtedly will run into a garage which does business on a strictly cash basis, but this makes very little difference to him, because he pays his bills promptly and he also knows that he is not paying for some one else's unpaid account.

As a rule, the first party to raise an objection to "a strictly cash basis" proposition is the garage owner or manager. The first thought is that they will lose their trade, or that the greater part of the trade will leave and go elsewhere. It is hard to say just what part of the trade will leave and go elsewhere unless one has a record of the customers who are slow in paying their bills or who don't pay them at all. If this record is available, it can be estimated that nearly all those customers will leave, and when they do the garage manager again can sit at ease and issue a great sign of relief, feeling that every transaction turned during the day

has done its share toward filling up the profit side of the ledger. Transferring from a credit basis to a cash basis requires considerable preparation, and unless judgment is used the trade is very apt to misconstrue the intent of the change. At least a week before the change would be the proper time to mail a personal letter to each one of your customers, announcing the fact that no one will receive credit on and after that date.

A great mistake is made by many concerns in leading the public to think their reason for wanting the cash is principally because they need the cash. Of course, it is quite evident the cash is needed, but it should not be represented to them in that way. The customer should conceive only the idea that he will receive more for his money by paying cash than if charge accounts were to be tolerated.

He readily sees the writer is truthful in his statements when he says that the man who pays his bills also is paying the bills of the fellow who never pays them. He also knows that the conclusion of peace this country will enter upon the greatest era of business activity and prosperity the world has ever known. With such a situation before us, the railroad should be increasing their facilities to handle the extra volume of freight; but just the opposite is the case. Because the railroads are obliged to reduce their big deficits, they are laying off to cut down expenses. This means lowered efficiency instead of increased efficiency which is necessary to cope with the situation. One of the big Western railroads only recently laid off 750 men in one of their shops.

The country had to turn to motor transportation in the emergency of war, and in the emergency of peace which will be even worse so far as volume of traffic is concerned, motor transportation is the only relief to which the country can look. "Business men who want to be sure that their freight will be handled must equip now with sufficient motor transportation. The demand for motor trucks is growing enormously, and business men will have to place their orders promptly if they want to be sure of getting their trucks when they need them."

"Each month has shown a steady increase in the sales of Mack transportation units. The demand in May increased 16 per cent over that in April, and the increase will unquestionably be greater with each month. This will be especially true immediately peace is concluded."

The fifty lucky scouts were selected from the 2,000 scouts of the city for their general proficiency in scoutcraft. Each is an honor scout—the representative of his particular troop. The tour will take about eighteen days and will carry the boys through many of the interesting historical sections of the east. The first stop on the "hike" is Niagara Falls. From this point the route runs through Syracuse and Utica to Albany, where it bears north, passing Lake George and Lake Champlain to Plattsburgh, then through northern Vermont, the White mountains of New Hampshire and the pine forests of Maine to Portland. The return leads through Boston, Providence, New Haven, West Point, Binghamton, Elmira, Ithaca and Youngstown.

## EXPECTS SHORTAGE IN TRANSPORTATION

"In the next few months this country will suffer from inadequate transportation facilities fully as badly as it did at any time during the war," says R. E. Fulton, vice president of the International Motor Company, manufacturers of Mack trucks, who warns business men to safeguard themselves now against transportation delays and tie-ups which are sure to come with the signing of the peace treaty.

"Discerning business men see what is ahead of them and are preparing now. Those who fail to do so will suffer loss later."

"The best authorities in the country agree that beginning immediately with the conclusion of peace this country will enter upon the greatest era of business activity and prosperity the world has ever known. With such a situation before us, the railroad should be increasing their facilities to handle the extra volume of freight; but just the opposite is the case. Because the railroads are obliged to reduce their big deficits, they are laying off to cut down expenses. This means lowered efficiency instead of increased efficiency which is necessary to cope with the situation. One of the big Western railroads only recently laid off 750 men in one of their shops."

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## PROFIT By Others' Experience STAR HAND-MADE TIRES

This account of the performance of four Star Tires is not exceptional—rather is it the rule for Star Tires to exceed the expectation. Read:

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**FRANK E. ELDER,**

628-29 Munsey Building. WASHINGTON, D. C.

June 3, 1919.

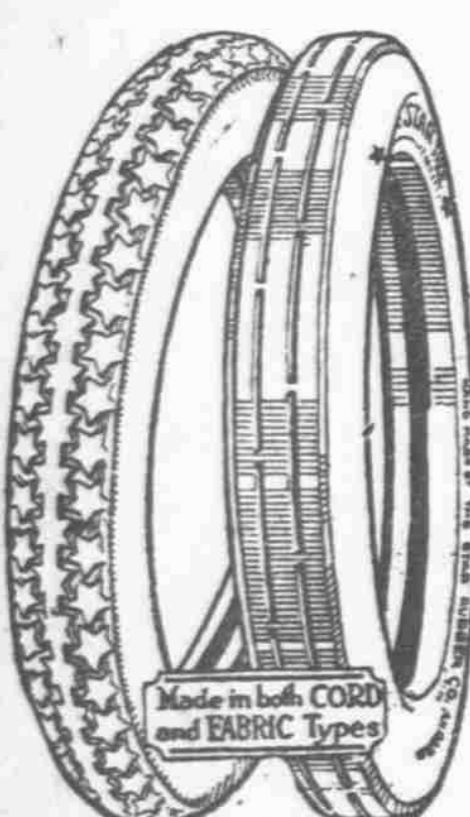
The Tire Shop,  
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Gentlemen:

It may be interesting to you to learn of the experience I have had with Star Tires. My car weighs approximately two tons and before using Star Tires, the best mileage I could get out of three much advertised and so-called standard make tires was 4,500 miles. I equipped my car with Star Tires and the first one was driven for 9,800 miles, then re-treaded and driven for 4,200 miles. Another has been driven over 10,000 and is still in excellent condition; another was driven 9,400 miles, then re-treaded and driven 3,500 miles and is still in use and in excellent condition; another has been driven 11,000 miles and the tread is still well covered with rubber.

It gives me pleasure to testify to the superior quality of Star Tires because they have contributed much to the comfort, satisfaction and safety of automobilism. I unhesitatingly recommend the use of Star Tires to every one who is looking for the best to be had at any price and the most for the money.

Faithfully yours,  
**FRANK E. ELDER.**



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## 231,130 Miles; Repairs but \$76; another amazing record for Maxwell Trucks

HERE are the third returns on the nation-wide inquiry to determine the reliability of Maxwell trucks. Group No. 1 showed 16 trucks, \$830.59 for repairs, for 90,010 miles. Group No. 2 showed 15 trucks, \$313.07 for repairs, for 109,700 miles.

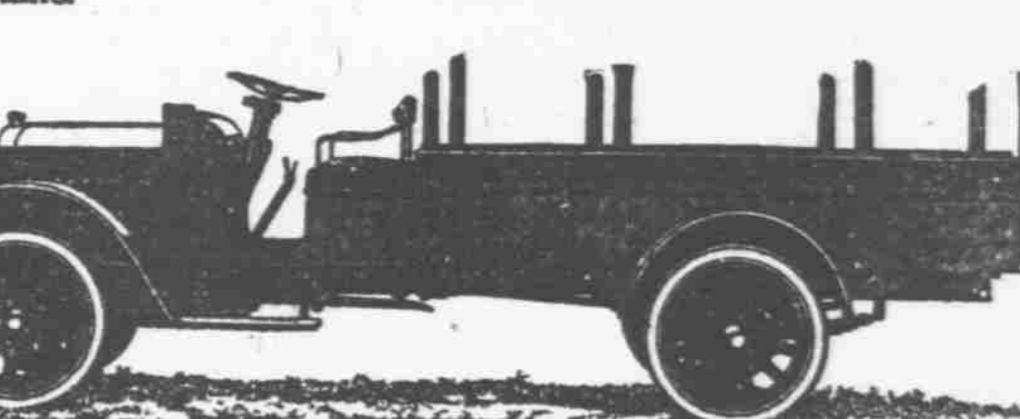
The group just examined follows:

Total Mileage	Actual Repair Cost	Total Mileage	Actual Repair Cost
15,500 . . . . .	\$2.50	18,000 . . . . .	\$ .00
13,950 . . . . .	.00	27,900 . . . . .	25.00
14,880 . . . . .	.00	20,000 . . . . .	.00
21,700 . . . . .	.00	15,500 . . . . .	10.00
15,500 . . . . .	.50	24,800 . . . . .	25.00
27,900 . . . . .	3.00	15,500 . . . . .	10.00

This is at the rate of \$7 per Maxwell truck against an average mileage of almost 20,000. This is, so far as we know, the most remarkable figure ever recorded on a motor truck, regardless of price.

Paralleling this repair cost record is the obvious and well-known gas, tire, and oil mileage economy of the Maxwell truck —so accepted in the trade and by the public that it no longer is a subject of comment.

Like a horse, a truck must be sound to be useful. A truck often seeking the aid of mechanics is like a sick horse. Maxwell, as these repair figures show, is a well nigh perfect piece of machinery. And when you consider the cost—chassis price \$1185 f.o.b. Detroit—you can easily figure what a great money earner it is. Many Maxwells pay back their cost in a year's time.



**H. B. LEARY, Jr.**

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